

Arab countries advise PNA to reconsider May 4 declaration

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Some Arab countries are advising the Palestinians to delay a May 4 declaration of statehood, to keep Benjamin Netanyahu from using it as a card in the Israeli elections, a senior Palestinian official said Sunday. Israeli elections are scheduled for May 17. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has indicated he would declare statehood by May 4 — a deadline for a permanent Israeli-Palestinian peace accord set by the 1993 Oslo accords. A unilateral declaration of statehood could give the Israeli prime minister a boost over his dovish challengers. The Palestinian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Egypt and Jordan have advised Arafat to consider the advantage such a declaration would give Netanyahu in the elections.

Volume 24 Number 7035

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جordan Times تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية الرأي



Saudi mufti condemns anniversary celebrations of ruling dynasty

RIYADH (AP) — Saudi Arabia's top religious leader issued a fatwa or religious decree here Sunday calling plans to celebrate the centenary of the ruling Al Saud dynasty as heretical. In leaflets distributed in Riyadh, mufti Abdul Aziz Abdallah Ben Baz condemned such celebrations as "heresy" and an imitation of "the nonbelievers." The kingdom is planning extensive festivities to mark the 100th anniversary of the capture of Riyadh by Abdul Aziz Al Saud, which marked the beginning of his consolidation of power over the peninsula. Riyadh was captured in 1902, but the anniversary has been calculated according to the lunar calendar, whose years are shorter than solar ones. Al Saud founded the Saudi kingdom in 1932. He was followed on the throne by a succession of his sons, including the current King Fahd.

King receives cable from King Hassan

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received a cable from King Hassan of Morocco congratulating him on the success of his treatment at Mayo Clinic and his full recovery. "We have been overwhelmed with joy over the delightful news which HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, had announced to the Jordanian people and to the world at large upon your discharge from hospital," King Hassan said in the cable. He wished King Hussein a safe return home and the Jordanian people further progress and prosperity.

Regent hosts iftar

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday hosted an iftar banquet at Al Hussein Youth City for senior officers of the Armed Forces. The Public Security Department, (PSD), the General Intelligence Department, the Civil Defence Department (CDD) and retired servicemen. Attending the banquet were Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Fayed Tarawneh, Senate President Zeid Rifai, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Hadi Majali, Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, HRH Prince Faisal, His Majesty King Hussein's Adviser Salah Abu Zeid, King Hussein's Military Adviser Hmeidi Al Fayez, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai, Kaabneh, PSD Director Nasoum Muhiuddin, CDD Director Theeb Ma'ni as well as other armed forces officers. Prince Hassan and his audience performed the Maghreb prayers.

Computer and gun stolen from top Mossad officer

TEL AVIV (AP) — Police have arrested a man suspected in the theft of a computer and a gun from a top official in Israel's Mossad intelligence agency. Police spokeswoman Etti Greenberg said Sunday that Stanislav Ostrovsky was arrested last week on suspicion of burglarising deputy Mossad director Amiram Levine's Tel Aviv home last November. Ostrovsky raised suspicions when failed to return to prison from a furlough from his seven-year sentence for burglary. Israel Radio suggested that Ostrovsky may have been trying to steal Levine's computer files for sale to another country.

EgyptAir jet makes emergency landing after bird strike

CAIRO (AP) — A bird smashed the flight deck windshield of an EgyptAir airliner with 33 people aboard, forcing the plane to make an emergency landing in Dubai, airport officials said Sunday. The Airbus 340, en route to Sydney on Saturday, landed in Dubai without further incident and no one on board was injured, they said. Passengers were then faced with a 24-hour delay after EgyptAir service staff brought the wrong type of replacement glass to the airport.

Saddam says Iraq to fight violations of no-fly zones

BAGHDAD (AP) — President Saddam Hussein said Sunday the "no-fly zones" imposed on his country have no basis in international law and vowed that Iraq will fight violations of its airspace "with all its courage and bravery."

Saddam's remarks to his cabinet were his first comments on the no-fly zones since top officials said

U.N. in talks to keep staff in Iraq — see page 12

Arab states have taken little action to support Iraq.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen met this weekend in Egypt to discuss a planned Arab League meeting that is expected to formulate the group's stand on the airstrikes.

Saddam said the no-fly zones are "not only a stark

ed States, Britain and France after the 1991 Gulf War to allegedly stop Iraq from using its air force against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq and Shi'ite Muslims in the south.

The no-fly zones are not sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council.

"What they are violating... is the will of the Arab Nation and the will of the Iraqi people..."

which is

determined to fight back with all its courage and bravery," Saddam said.

Saddam also sought to cast doubt on U.S. claims that its planes were firing back when they aimed missiles and bombs at Iraqi anti-aircraft batteries in two recent clashes.

The no-fly zones, which cover about two-thirds of Iraq, were set up by the Unit

(Continued on page 12)



Irqi women wait outside a government office at Baghdad's district Al Askan to receive coupons for their annual purchase of food and medicine on Sunday. Iraq introduced a rationing system after the Gulf War to offset the suffering caused by the rapid increase in foodstuff prices and to distribute the goods which the country bought under an "oil-for-food" deal which allows Iraq to export a limited amount of oil every six months to buy food, medicines and other relief goods (Reuters photo)

Khatib visit to Kuwait to end strain in ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Al Khatib has received an invitation from his Kuwaiti counterpart, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, to visit the Gulf emirate, but no date was yet set for the visit.

Khatib said he received a message from Sheikh Sabah inviting him to visit Kuwait and offering congratulations on the King's full recovery from lymphoma and wishing him a safe return home.

In earlier statement in Kuwait Sunday, Sheikh Sabah was quoted by news agencies as saying the visit would officially end the eight-year strain in ties between the two Arab countries.

He told reporters that he had extended the invitation to his Jordanian counterpart.

He did not say when the Jordanian minister would make the visit.

Ties between Kuwait and Jordan soured during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis because of Amman's perceived tilt toward Iraq that invaded Kuwait and occupied it for seven months before its troops were evicted by a U.S.-led coalition.

Relations began warming up gradually in 1995 when Jordan distanced itself from Baghdad and called for political change in Iraq.

In June, former planning minister Rima Khalaf became the first cabinet member to visit the oil-rich state after the crisis.

Asked when the Jordanian embassy will reopen in Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah said: "When he [Khatib] comes to Kuwait, everything will be over."

The embassy has been closed since the crisis, but Kuwait's diplomatic mission in Amman remained open, headed by a chargé d'affaires.

Six Lebanese civilians wounded in Israeli air raid

BAALBEK (AP) — Israeli warplanes attacked suspected resistance movement positions deep inside Lebanon on Sunday, wounding six people, Lebanese security officials said.

The officials said the victims included a Lebanese woman and four daughters.

The Lebanese militia Hizbullah has often fired katyusha rockets at northern Israel to retaliate for Israeli strikes in which Lebanese civilians are wounded.

Hizbullah's deputy leader, Sheikh Naim Kassem, threatened to revenge Sunday's raid.

"We reserve our right to retaliate in the appropriate way, time and place," he said.

He told reporters that he had extended the invitation to his Jordanian counterpart.

He did not say when the Jordanian minister would make the visit.

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In Tel Aviv, the Israeli army said in a statement that its jets attacked guerrilla "infrastructure targets," including a training base used by Hizbullah and a radio station.

"Both targets were outside populated areas," the army statement said.

The Lebanese security officials said Israeli jets fired two air-to-surface missiles at Hizbullah's Voice of the Oppressed radio station near this ancient Roman city, damaging its transmitter. The radio went off the air.

The four raiding jets also fired four missiles at the hills around the villages of Nabi Sheet and Janta, about 23 kilometers southeast of Baalbek, they said. They spoke on customary condition of

anonymity.

The officials said the mother, identified as 55-year-old Hamdah Ayyoub, was wounded during the raid on Janta along with four daughters. Witnesses said they were not badly hurt.

Ayyoub's husband, Ahmad, 60, told reporters that his wife and daughters were wounded by shrapnel from a missile that fell 50 metres from their house.

He said the house was badly damaged. Ahmad Ayyoub said he was not at home at the time of the attack.

A man was wounded in the same raid, the officials said. The Christian Voice of Lebanon radio station said he was a Syrian soldier.

Anti-aircraft gunners of the

Lebanese army and the Iran-backed Hizbullah guerrilla group fired at the jets but apparently did not hit them, the officials said.

It was the second Israeli attack on Janta in less than two weeks.

On Dec. 22, Israeli warplanes struck suspected guerrilla bases there, killing a Lebanese woman and six of her children.

Hizbullah retaliated with a barrage of katyusha rockets into northern Israel that injured one person.

Fifteen others were treated for shock.

Sunday's air raid came a day after Hizbullah's secretary-general, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, warned that his group would bombard north-

ern Israel with rockets again if the Jewish state carried out its threat to attack deep inside Lebanon.

"The situation is open to all possibilities," he told the Associated Press in an interview Saturday.

"Our katyusha rockets are always ready," he said, referring to the Soviet-designed surface-to-surface missiles that Hizbullah launches from southern Lebanon.

Hizbullah is leading a guerrilla war to oust some 1,500 Israeli soldiers and their allied Lebanese militiamen from an Israeli-occupied border strip in southern Lebanon.

Israeli govt receives tenders for Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement

TEL AVIV (AP) — Seven Israeli businessmen have put in tenders for the construction of a controversial Jewish settlement, known as Har Homa, in Arab east Jerusalem, the housing ministry said Sunday.

The ministry said work would start once the contractors have been selected in the next few weeks or months.

Ground clearing at the site in March 1997 angered Palestinians and led to a 19-month deadlock in the peace process which was only broken by October's U.S.-brokered Wye River peace agreement.

The settlement is to be built in the Jabal Abu Ghneim district on

the borders of Arab east Jerusalem and the autonomous Palestinian town of Bethlehem and is planned to contain a total of 6,000 housing units when completed.

The initial tenders are for the first stage of 1,025 units.

Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush had proposed subsidising purchases, fearing that high prices might put off potential buyers, but the ministry says this has been turned down, since it believes there will be sufficient demand for the homes.

Work was suspended in December 1997 after the infrastructure had been laid, but the government issued a

ments calling for tenders for the construction in November.

The Palestinians say the invitation of tenders was a breach of the Wye agreement under which each side promised not to undertake any unilateral action which could "change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip."

But Israel insists the provision does not apply to Arab east Jerusalem which it regards as part of its "eternal undivided capital."

The international community has never recognised Israel's annexation of the city's Arab eastern sector which it occupied in 1967.

Europe poised for euro debut on financial markets

BERLIN (AP) — After days of slaving round the clock, banks and financial institutions across Europe were ready Sunday for the debut of the new common currency — or euro — on financial markets.

The stroke of midnight New Year's Eve brought the long-anticipated fusion of 11 European currencies into one. But the true test of the currency launch happens Monday, the euro's first day of business.

While preparations for the euro started in 1996, fine-tuning had to wait until after the exchange rate was set. That happened Thursday, leaving financial institutions just four days to adjust software and convert stock papers and bank accounts into euros.

By Sunday evening, the job was done. From its skyscraper headquarters in Frankfurt, the European Central Bank — ground zero for euro monetary policy — declared the weekend changeover a success.

ECB monitors found no glitches in preparations at any of the national banks or key financial institutions of the euro nations: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

"Preparations have gone well," said Heering Lighart, president of the Association Cambiste Internationale, the international foreign exchange dealers association in Luxembourg.

Still, he said, most banks will be very nervous about putting the systems under too much pressure, reluctant to find that they or their business partners were not fully prepared.

"People will start very slowly," he predicted, suggesting trading won't reach full speed for some days.

Euro coins and bills will not enter cash registers and purses for another three years. On paper, though, the euro is now the main European currency for electronic transfers, checks and credit card payments. German stores, for example, will advertise products in marks and euros until the currency hits the streets, giving customers the option to pay in either.

The first known electronic transaction happened one second into 1999, when a man in Frankfurt used a credit card to buy champagne. And while international trading of the euro started Sunday in Australia at 1600 GMT, the euro's debut was not expected to begin in earnest until the opening of European markets.

Israeli police arrest members of Denver-based cult

MEVASSERET ZION (AP) — Israeli police detained eight adults and six children belonging to a Denver-based apocalyptic Christian cult on Sunday and accused the group of planning violent acts in occupied Jerusalem.

Police said that the group planned to provoke a bloody shoot-out by opening fire on Israeli police and members of the cult on Sunday and accused the group of planning violent acts in occupied Jerusalem.

The cult's leader has been identified as Monte Kim Miller.

The cult members — including three families as well as individuals — did not resist arrest when police raided two apartments in suburbs outside Jerusalem. The Shin Bet, Israel's internal security

service, was heavily involved in the arrests.

The raid was led by Jerusalem area commander Yair Yitzhak.

Police planned to work with the interior ministry to deport the suspects, and did not plan to try them.

A U.S. embassy official said that a consular official would visit those arrested as soon as possible.

A senior police source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the cult members believed that being killed by police "would lead them to heaven."

He said many of the violent

acts were planned for Jerusalem's Old City and that their possible location was Harun Al Sharif.

The cult members had been under police surveillance for a month. They lived in homes in Mevasseret Zion and Moza, well-to-do western suburbs of Jerusalem. Police said they were financed by funds raised overseas, not necessarily in the United States.

The house in Mevasseret Zion was two stories, on a steep hillside overlooking Jerusalem.

"They were so nice, so quiet, so polite," said neighbour Rumi Hanono. He said

(Continued on page 12)

Iraq steps up vitriolic attacks on Mubarak

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq launched its third day of vitriolic attacks Sunday on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, accusing him of delaying an Arab summit at which Baghdad hoped to win strong backing.

"Mubarak is playing the same role of conspirator as he did in 1990," said the Babel newspaper, run by the Iraqi president's eldest son, Uday Saddam Hussein.

In 1990-91, Iraq pointed a finger at Mubarak over Egypt's involvement in "Operation Desert Storm," the U.S.-led multinational campaign that ejected occupying Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

The newspaper published Sunday a caricature of an Iraqi throwing a shoe at Mubarak, who is being supported by an Israeli.

The Al Musawer Al Arabi weekly depicted Mubarak as a horse, with U.S. President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seated on the saddle.

His tongue hanging out.

Mubarak is drooling over the dollar bills U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is throwing in his face.

"Here is the true face of the Egyptian government: Hosni, the American and Israeli mount," the cartoon's caption read.

On Saturday, Babel branded Mubarak an opportunist for his stand on Iraq.

Hosni is well known for his opportunism and his hypocrisy in the political field," the influential newspaper said.

The daily published a caricature of the Egyptian president as a belly dancer performing for Clinton, Albright and Netanyahu, while Gulf leaders made up the band providing the music.

Mubarak, in remarks published Friday, blamed Saddam Hussein for his people's continuing plight. His reproach was the latest in a series of bitter Egyptian attacks on Iraq.

Ties between Egypt and Iraq were broken during

the 1991 Gulf War by Baghdad. But 1998 saw a thaw which included a visit by Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz to Cairo.

The Iraqi ministers of trade and health were also in Egypt, and Egyptian exports to Iraq went up to \$250 million.

But the war of words between the two started just 48 hours after the first U.S. and British missile strikes last month, when Aziz implicitly criticised Egypt and Saudi Arabia for having merely "expressed regret and concern."

Aziz stepped up his rhetoric on Tuesday, after Mubarak's pointed criticism of the Baghdad regime, calling the Egyptian president a lapdog of the United States.

"No honest and reasonable person in Egypt, the Arab World and in the world can share the comments of Mr. Mubarak who has adopted the U.S. policy of double standards," he wrote in the Al Jumhuriya daily.

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'Oil exports limited to \$3 billion'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Sunday said it would not be able to export more than \$3 billion worth of crude in the fifth six-month phase of the U.N. oil-for-food programme.

"Because of its export capacities and the low oil prices, Iraq will not be able to export more than \$3 billion worth of oil," Saddam Zabani Al Hassan, chairman of the State Organisation for Marketing of Oil (Somo), told the Al Musawer Al Arabi newspaper.

This is \$2.2 billion less than the ceiling set under the programme's latest

phase which began in late November. The programme is an exemption from the sweeping sanctions imposed following Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait which allows it to sell limited quantities of crude to oil importers.

Iraq is allowed to buy some spare parts for its oil industry, but U.N. approval of these contracts has been slow.

Hassan said that by the end of December Iraq had received only a small fraction of one spare parts contract out of a total of 233. The oil chief also said 63 oil sale contracts had been signed with foreign firms since the start of the fifth phase, all of which have received U.N. approval.

Iraq has struggled to reach the \$2.2 billion ceiling because it has not been able

to repair its battered oil industry, hit by the 1991 Gulf war and eight years of U.N. sanctions.

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Israeli guard held for threat to Barak

KIRYAT SHMONA (R) — Israeli police detained an airport security guard suspected of calling for the killing of opposition leader Ehud Barak while awaiting the politician's arrival on Sunday on an election campaign visit.

Yair Ben-Abbo, 26, told reporters he did not mean to threaten Barak. Police quoted him as saying: "All the Ashkenazim and 'highbrows' must be murdered and also Ehud Barak."

Ashkenazim are Jews of European origin.

Police asked a magistrate to allow them to hold him for a few days for further questioning.

Three years ago a right-wing Jew opposed to returning Israeli-occupied land to Palestinians assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a predecessor of Barak as leader of Israel's Labour party.

"Clearly given the background with which we are all familiar, everything must be checked seriously and that's what we are doing," Avi Tiller, commander of the Galilee police district, told Israel Radio.

The privately hired armed guard, working at Kiryat Shmona airport in northern Israel, was overheard by a Shin Bet secret service man telling another security guard that Barak should be killed, police said.

"What I said was from my standpoint an unfortunate mistake, an unfortunate slip of the tongue. I had no intention — I don't stand behind these things and that's it. I am very sorry and express regret," Ben-Abbo told reporters.

A senior source in Sharon's office denied there had been any request to meet Albright.

"We did not ask for any special meetings," the source, who declined to be identified, said. "There was no snub."

Sharon's office said in a statement U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross would meet the foreign minister when Sharon is in New York.



Asian Muslims break their fast at a mosque in Sharjah on Sunday. Mosques offer mass meals for poorer people during the holy month (AFP photo)

'Sharon snubbed by Albright'

TEL AVIV (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has refused to meet Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon when he travels to the United States this week, Israel's Haaretz newspaper reported on Sunday.

Sharon's spokesman, Raanan Gissin, refused to confirm or deny the report that Albright, upset over Israel's suspension of an interim peace deal with the Palestinians, had snubbed a request to discuss with Sharon ideas for a final peace accord.

"It is customary that a visit by Israel's minister of foreign affairs is brought to the attention of the State Department in the United States," the statement said.

"The State Department has notified Israel's embassy in Washington that Mr. Dennis Ross, Special Middle East Coordinator, will come to New York to meet Foreign Minister Sharon," it said.

The Israeli cabinet last month froze implementation of the Wye River peace accord over alleged Palestinian violations of the land-for-security deal and linked progress to a string of conditions not included in the agreement.

Sharon's office said in a statement U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross would meet the foreign minister when Sharon is in New York.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Israel used outdated data in attack'

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli inquiry into the killing of a Lebanese woman and six of her children in a botched Israeli air raid found faulty intelligence data largely to blame for the incident, the daily Maariv reported on Sunday. The newspaper said intelligence pictures of the site where the woman and her children were killed in their house on Dec. 22, 1998, were outdated, having been taken some three years ago. It also found the raid was held up by several hours pending permission, which affected outside lighting and may have skewed the pilot's judgement.

'Yemen can't join Commonwealth'

LONDON (AFP) — Yemen, which is facing tough questioning over the deaths of four kidnapped tourists after a bloody rescue operation, will fail in its bid to join the Commonwealth, a British minister was reported Sunday to have said. Foreign Office junior minister Tony Lloyd has confirmed that Yemen's recent application to join the 54-nation body would be turned down because it does not meet the entry criteria on good governance. The Observer reported: "Clearly at the moment there are some issues that have to be resolved." Lloyd was quoted as telling the newspaper: "Yemen's application was first considered at the 1997 Commonwealth heads of government summit in Scotland."

Japan to try revive Syrian-Israeli talks

DAMASCUS (R) — Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura will visit Syria this week for talks on ways to revive Syrian-Israeli peace talks which broke off some three years ago, officials and diplomats said on Sunday. A Japanese embassy spokesman told Reuters that Komura, who will also visit Israel as part of a regional tour, would hold talks with President Hafez Al Assad and Foreign Minister Farouq Al Shara. His visit starts on Friday. "The talks will focus on the latest developments of the Middle East peace process and ways of resuming the Syrian-Israeli peace talks," the spokesman said.

Bodies of hostages arrive in Britain

LONDON (AP) — The bodies of three British tourists and an Australian killed during a shootout between Yemeni troops and a gang of kidnappers arrived in Britain late Saturday. Britons Margaret Whitehouse, 52, Ruth Williamson, 34, and Peter Rowe, 60, and Australian Andrew Thirk, 35, died when the Yemeni authorities launched a rescue operation Tuesday after the kidnapping of 16 Western tourists by Islamic extremists. Amid confusion over who fired first and British government concerns over some of the aspects of how the operation was handled, U.S. security experts and British detectives from Scotland Yard arrived in Yemen late Friday to investigate the deaths.

Netanyahu ally forms party ahead of elections

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu's longtime ally Avigdor Lieberman launched a new party on Sunday, aiming to rally the support of Russian-speaking Israelis around the prime minister ahead of May elections.

But political analysts differed on whether his Yisrael Baitenu party — Hebrew for "Israel is Our Home" — would help or hurt Netanyahu.

Michael Eitan, a loyalist in Netanyahu's Likud Party, predicted Lieberman, who was instrumental in solidifying Netanyahu's control over Likud, would hurt the party by taking votes away in the May 17 elections.

Promising a social revolution, Lieberman, who immigrated to

Israel 20 years ago, told a news conference: "I intend to act with all of my power so that Benjamin Netanyahu is elected prime minister."

But Lieberman, formerly Netanyahu's chief of staff and a fellow survivor of a corruption scandal which ensnared them both, immediately ignited a public row by vowing to topple the "police state" he said Israel had become.

His opening salvo — an attack on police, state prosecutors and Israel's Supreme Court — prompted an outpouring of criticism across the political spectrum.

He resigned the chief-of-staff job two months later.

At his Tel Aviv news conference

spoke for himself alone.

"I was opposed to the formation of this list. I felt there is no room for more lists. It only increases the fragmentation in the public," Netanyahu told reporters. Lieberman helped to chart Netanyahu's meteoric rise to power but failed as chief of staff to stop the Israeli leader from lurching from crisis to crisis.

When prosecutors finally closed the case against him in 1997 in connection with the short-lived appointment of a new attorney-general, they said suspicions lingered that he had had a role in the scandal.

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"When I say we've become a police state, I mean it. When I say I have no faith in the justice system and law enforcement in the state of Israel, I mean it... We need police who look for the murderers and rapists and not the newspaper headlines," he said.

Lieberman's party could loosen the grip of former Soviet Jewish dissident, Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky, on the one in every six Israelis who hail from the former Soviet Union.

Buoyed by hundreds of thousands of immigrants arriving

since 1989, Sharansky's Yisrael ba-Aliya party — "Israel of Immigration" — came out of nowhere in 1996 national elections with the clout to make or break Netanyahu's government.

Israel's parliament is due to give final approval on Monday to advancing elections planned for 2000 to May 17, 1999. The vote was precipitated by splits in Netanyahu's rightist coalition over a land-for-security peace deal with Palestinians.

While still an aide to Netanyahu, Lieberman — an opponent of ceding West Bank land — was quoted in 1997 as saying he opposed Israel's "sucking up" to Arabs. The spokesman said in a statement U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross would meet the foreign minister when Sharon is in New York.

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweileh, Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Yahya Abd Al Rahim ..4126072

Dr. Khalil Tushuq ..4757253

Dr. Bahjat Badar ..5332642

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim ..5350432

FIRAS Pharmacy ..5661912

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Relative warm weather conditions

will prevail with temperatures ris-

ing slightly. Clouds will appear at

different altitudes and winds

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ..4637111

Civil Defence Department ..5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ..4630341

Civil Defence Emergency ..199

Rescue Police ..192, 4621111, 4627777

Fire Brigade ..4617101

Blood Bank ..4775121

Highway Police ..5343402

Traffic Police ..4896390

Public Security Dept. ..4630321

Hotel Complaints ..5605800

Price Complaints ..5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints ..4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints ..4787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) ..121

Overseas Calls ..0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs ..4623101

Abdal Tel. Repairs ..5661101

Jordan Television ..4773111

Radio Jordan ..4774111

Water Authority ..5680100

Electricity Authority ..5

Police charge married couple with six counts of murder

AMMAN (J.T.) — A man and his wife are in custody in Amman facing charges of murder in six cases involving the death of seven people: two men, four women and a six-month-old child.

The Director of Amman Police Department Hisham Ensour, who announced the arrest of Bilal Mohammad and Suzan Ibrahim, said the couple had committed the crimes in Amman and Zarqa over the past four years and have confessed to the murders which they said were committed in the course of robbery.

According to Brigadier Ensour, the two suspects fled to Libya after allegedly committing the crimes and robbing their victims of their jewellery and cash, but were turned over to the Jordanian authorities on Dec. 13, 1998 after having been extradited.

He said that the suspects used to enter the homes of their victims by claiming that they represented a tourist agency. They then stabbed their victims and slashed their throats before robbing their homes.

Ensour pointed out that the first of these crimes were reported in December of 1994. The first victim was a woman resident of Al Rashid Housing Estate. The second occurred on March 27 of 1995, and the victim was a woman and her child living in Shmeisani. The third of 1997 and the victim was found along the Italian Hospital Street in downtown Amman, while the fourth was reported in March of 1998. The fourth victim was a woman found dead in her Hashemi Shamali home. The fifth crime was reported in May of 1998; the victim was a woman living

in the University of Jordan's Housing Estate. The sixth was reported in May of 1998 and the victim was an elderly man living in Awajan district of Zarqa.

Ensour pointed out that the murders were all committed during the morning hours when most men are at work rather than at home.

According to Ensour, thorough and continued investigations into the murders led the police to suspect Mohammed, who was employed by a marketing agency, and Ibrahim, who allegedly abetted him in his murders.

Following arrest, the two married and fled the country in September of 1998, travelling first to Egypt and later to Libya where they settled until Jordanian authorities contacted the Libyan authorities to commence extradition procedures.

what's going on

FILMS

"La Belle et la Bête" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 8:30 p.m.

"The Rock" at Books @ Café, Jabal Amman on Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650458).

Concert

Musical performance entitled "May God Protect Al Hussein" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

RAMADAN EVENING

Ramadan evening at the American Center, Abdoun at 7:30 p.m. (The evening will feature poetry and percussion by Arab-American Poet Elmar Abnader and Percussionist Dier Jones, as well as traditional Arabic music by oud player Elia Khouri).

EXHIBITIONS

Photo exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 16.

Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 536098); until Jan. 25.

Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Jan. 15 (Tel. 5699141/2).

"The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Oftali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.

The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

Germany's Von Hoessle expected Wednesday

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The director of the Near and Middle East Department at Germany's Federal Foreign Office, Ambassador Andreas Von Hoessle, is expected here late Wednesday for consultations with Jordanian officials on the stalled Middle East peace process and Iraq.

German embassy officials told the Jordan Times on Sunday that Von Hoessle is scheduled to hold talks with Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib and Planning Minister Nabil Ammari during his one-and-a-half-day stay in the Kingdom.

The visit, part of a regional tour including Israel, the Palestinian self-rule areas, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, aims to assess the prospects for the peace process following Israel's decision to freeze implementation of the Oct. 23 Wye River Memorandum with the Palestinians, one German embassy source said.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last month cancelled a second West Bank withdrawal Israel is required to carry out under the Wye deal. The Israeli premier is insisting that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat abandon plans to declare a Palestinian state unilaterally when the interim five-year period of self-rule expires on May 4.

Von Hoessle's talks on Iraq will focus on "the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people and the need for bringing Iraq back into the peoples' community," the German official added.

Germany has diplomatically supported the U.S. and Great Britain during last month's airstrikes against Baghdad. But, under pressure from its industries and powerful business circles, Bonn has long stressed the need to lift the eight-year-old sanctions and reopen the Iraqi oil market to regional and global trade.

Farmers Federation employees to be paid this week

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Forty-seven employees at the National Committee of the Jordan Farmers Federation, Jordan Valley Branch, are going to be paid "around this week," after a four-month wait, said Minister of Agriculture Mijehim Kheirisha.

The Jordan Valley Branch employees have not received their wages since August 1998 due to the national committee's financial problems.

The government used to grant the National Committee of the Jordan Farmers Federation JD250,000 yearly — an amount raised by several associations such as the Jordan Agricultural Credit Organisation and the Ministry of Finance, said Kheirisha.

"Since the beginning of January, the National Committee of the Jordan Farmers Federation is going to be funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Jordan Valley Authority and organisations that used to grant funds to farmers," Kheirisha explained.

Forty-nine employees from the Jordan Valley Branch were re-employed in other government organisations in order to "reduce the committee's financial expenses."

Kheirisha indicated that the employees were not laid off or dismissed because "we need them and they are well experienced and have been working with us for years."

Kheirisha told the Jordan Times that the delay in the payment of salaries was discussed with Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh and Finance Minister Michel Marto. As a result, it was agreed to allocate to the committee all the money needed for its expenses, including the JD60,000 accumulated wages.

Mulki postpones Baghdad trip

By Mohammed Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Minister of Energy Hani Mulki has postponed his long overdue visit to Iraq to renew an annual deal between the two countries because of the recent gas problems which left many Jordanians in state of confusion.

"The crisis has been over since Thursday, but people are buying more [gas cylinders] than they need which has complicated the problem," Mulki told the Jordan Times.

Mulki was earlier forced to postpone his visit to Iraq due to the American-led air strikes late last month, and it is not clear when the visit will be rescheduled.

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'CIA aiding Indian missionaries to spread Christianity'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Hindu hardline group has alleged that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is aiding Christian missionaries in India, as Christians come under fresh attacks, reports said Sunday.

The Asian Age quoted a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council), which is spearheading an anti-Christian drive, as saying the CIA was giving funds to propagate Christianity in India.

Archarya Giriraj Kishore, senior vice-president of the VHP, said \$12 million "is pumped in to help the spread of Christianity in India as a part of a global evangelisation plan."

"With these funds they were roping in unemployed youths and indulging in conversions (of Hindus)," he said.

The VHP is an anti-Muslim and anti-Christian group allied to India's ruling Hindu nationalist-led government. It has been accused of attacking Christians in recent weeks in the western state of Gujarat.

Kishore denied this, and instead alleged that the violence unleashed against the Christian minority was a "well planned conspiracy

by the Christian world, particularly the CIA," against Hindu-dominated India.

The campaign against Christians, who make up just 2.5 per cent of India's 975 million people, has embarrassed the nine-month-old government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Vajpayee's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) has tried to distance itself from the extremist violence. Sunday, it described the violence as "extremely unfortunate."

Vajpayee, seen as the most secular of Hindu nationalist politicians, is being forced to tread a fine line between the sectarian demands of his party's Hindu revivalist allies and India's secular constitution.

Christians say attacks by Hindu zealots have increased since the BJP came to office in India at the head of a multi-party coalition last year. Most attacks have taken place in BJP-ruled Gujarat.

Despite the government's pledge to halt the violence against Christians, sporadic incidents continued in Gujarat, with two chapels set on fire late Thursday and Friday, newspapers said Sunday.

Both attacks took place in the tribal-dominated district of Dangs. The Indian Express said: "No one was injured in the violence."

The newspaper quoted Father Cedric Prakash, a local Church leader, as saying that Hindu fundamentalists were "using terror tactics" against Christians.

Sunday, the second largest member of India's ruling coalition said the unending violence in "defiance of central authority struck at the very heart of



An unidentified priest stands outside a damaged building in Subir village in the western Indian state of Gujarat. Terror-stricken by violent attacks on churches and missionary institutions, the Christian community in tribal areas of India's Gujarat province feels threatened and insecure (Reuters pbntn)

good governance."

The AIADMK party said

the violence had "stained

the fair name of India,"

and urged New Delhi to sack

the Gujarat government if

the attacks did not halt.

A federal government

team which visited Gujarat

has blamed Hindu fundamentalists for the violence.

Vajpayee, in a New Year message, denounced "religious bigotry" and said every Indian, "irrespective of his caste or creed," had

the same rights.

The authorities have been

widely criticised over the

anti-Christian violence.

New Delhi Archbishop

Alan de Lastic accused the

BJP-led Gujarat government

of inaction and said

its chief minister appeared

to have given the attackers

"a free hand."

"I do not think the mis-

creants can go on without

the approval of top leaders.

This kind of systematic

planned violence against

one community has

never

been

seen," he said.

"This mars the democratic

spirit of the constitution.

It is all right to have an ideology but do not force it down somebody else's throat like they (Hindu hardliners) are doing.

"There have been a lot of

words. Now it is time for

action that will preserve

and protect the rights of the

minorities in the home state

of Mahatma Gandhi," de

Lastic said.

Outba

round

Australia wants U.N. access to Angola crash site

CANBERRA (R) — Australia called Sunday for United Nations officials to be granted access to the site of a U.N.-chartered plane shot down in Angola over rebel territory.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer also expressed concern about the fate of those on board the aircraft, which crashed on Dec. 26.

They include Australian lawyer Patrick Luckman, who was working for the United Nations.

"There are compelling humanitarian reasons to allow access because of the continuing great distress to the families of those on board," Downer said in a statement.

Australia was also concerned about the way the United Nations had been frustrated in its attempts to reach the crash site.

The C-130 cargo plane, carrying 14 people including Luckman and seven other U.N. workers, crashed

just after taking off from the central Angolan town of Huambo.

Another U.N. C-130 with eight passengers and crew was shot down over the same district Saturday, the U.N. said.

The town is in a battle zone between Angolan government forces and rebels from the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Since the plane came down there have been conflicting reports about whether its passengers survived.

These reports are placing an intolerable burden on the families of those who were on board the aircraft, including an Australian, Mr. Patrick Luckman," Downer said.

"United Nations officials in Angola are still having difficulty getting to the truth of the matter and the Australian government would be extremely concerned if the crash develops

into some kind of propaganda game between UNITA forces and the Angolan government.

"I have asked the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Penny Wensley, to directly inform the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, of the Australian government's deep concern about the way in which the United Nations has been frustrated in its efforts to reach the crash site."

Downer said he had also asked Wensley to make representations to the Angolan representative and had asked Australia's High Commissioner in Harare, Denise Fischer, to travel to Angola as soon as possible to convey Australia's concerns to the government and to the UNITA rebels.

Both Australian representatives would continue to support Mr. Annan's appeals to the Angolan government and UNITA for access to the crash site.

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be replaced.

The Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah states on the east coast of peninsula Malaysia follow the Muslim calendar and observe Friday and Saturday as weekends.

Twenty schools in Kelantan state, where two people have died, were flooded or had access roads cut, state education director Mohamed Hassan was quoted as saying by the official Bernama news agency.

Mohamed said the schools were expected to resume class in the next two days as flood waters appeared to be receding.

"The students would be asked to attend class if it is not dangerous for them to do so," he reportedly said after visiting affected schools.

A Kelantan education official said the department had left it to the discretion of school principals to decide on the closure, but any holidays would have to

and 2.5 metres at the

schools," Pahang chief minister Mohamad Khalil Yaacob reportedly said.

"It will take at least two to three days for the water to subside even if the rain stops."

So far, 2,199 people from 400 families in five districts in Pahang have been evacuated and placed in 62 relief centres, police spokesman Hamzah Mat Jamil said.

The Sunday Star reported

that northern Johore state

was not spared, with flood

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Officials in both Kelantan

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hit by floods were mostly

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Several spots in the two

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The situation is that bad

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Team RE/MAX balloon pilots Dave Liniger of Denver Colorado (left) and Bob Martin of Albuquerque New Mexico are pictured inside the gondola during testing at mission control Jan. 3. The team announced yesterday it was likely that only two pilots would fly in the gondola due to safety concerns. It is unknown which pilot will not make the flight which is an attempt to set a world record for a non-stop balloon flight around the globe flying in the stratosphere (Reuters photo)

Outback winds delay round-world balloon attempt

ALICE SPRINGS, Australia (R) — An attempt to boldly circle the earth in a balloon flying on the edge of space was put off for at least five days Sunday because of high winds at the launch pad in outback Australia.

The lift-off was originally scheduled for Dec. 27, but has been postponed repeatedly because the giant balloon — designed to avoid weather problems by cruising at a height of 39 km — is vulnerable to winds at launch.

The next possible launch is Friday, Jan. 8," said Steve Gascogne, a spokeswoman for Team RE/MAX, the Australian-U.S. team preparing the balloon attempt.

Gascogne said a low pressure zone was heading from the north towards the launch pad at Alice Springs, bringing higher winds to Australia's dusty "red centre" and preventing a lift-off as earlier planned. Monday.

A high pressure zone moving up from the southwest could then bring rain mid-week, forcing a further delay until at least Friday at the NASA launch facility at Alice Springs.

The team is aiming to become the first to circle the earth non-stop in a balloon. Two of their rivals, Britain's Richard Branson and American Steve Fossett were plucked from the sea off Hawaii last week as bad weather forced them to abort a similar round-world attempt.

No other team has yet attempted to fly so high at the weekend that a band of extreme cold temperature at about 20,000 metres could jeopardise the mission unless one of the three men remained behind.

The balloon will be 270 metres high at launch — about the same as a 40-

storey building — before rounding out with helium. Gascogne said Sunday that winds at that height were currently 12 knots, more than the balloon could handle.

The balloon is made of polyethylene only marginally thicker than lunch wrap with 178 supporting straps down to an aluminium gondola — explaining its vulnerability.

The gondola was originally going to carry three balloonists, Australian John Walfington and Americans Dave Liniger and Bob Martin.

But the team said at the weekend that a band of extreme cold temperature at about 20,000 metres could jeopardise the mission unless one of the three men remained behind.

The balloon and payload must pass through a band of extreme cold temperature before entering the stratosphere," said co-pilot Liniger.

"If the ascent is too slow, the balloon itself could become brittle and prone to failure," Liniger said. Additional external ballast may be required to increase the balloon's ascent through the cold band, but extra weight could not be added to the overall payload — meaning that one of the pilots would have to miss the trip.

The three are due to decide between themselves who misses the trip and gave no hints Sunday who would be chosen.

Despite the delays, the pilots and support staff at the Alice Springs mission control have maintained high spirits and are using the extra time to fine-tune the balloon, ignoring daytime temperatures in Alice Springs of up to 38 Celsius.

The trip is expected to take 18 days and will return the balloon to Australia.

"We must respond to voters' worries and assure them we will not ignore the reality and make any reckless moves," Chiu pointed out that ruling Nationalists still cling to the goal of eventual reunification with China although they have in fact moved towards establishing a de facto sovereign state in Taiwan.

The four participants were divided over whether the party's platform should be amended, but they agreed the Democratic Progressive Party must try to ease public wariness that it is heading toward military confrontation with China.

Former DPP Secretary General Chiu Yih-Jen objected to revising the platform, which would require any declaration of independence be put to a public referendum.

"Establishing a sovereign Republic of Taiwan remains our goal, but it does not mean we will resort to any means to achieve that goal," he said.

"We must respond to voters' worries and assure them we will not ignore the reality and make any reckless moves," Chiu pointed out that ruling Nationalists still cling to the goal of eventual reunification with China although they have in fact moved towards establishing a de facto sovereign state in Taiwan.

Lawmaker Lin Cho-Shui also objected to changing the platform, saying it still will not appease Beijing.

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The main opposition party lost badly in last month's legislative elections to the Nationalists, and many DPP politicians realise its independence platform could cost them votes.

The debate will be followed by months of public

and private talks before the platform comes up for formal discussion at the party congress in May.

Kuo Cheng-Liang, a political scientist and a former DPP strategist, proposed changing the platform to reflect the DPP's position that it will not rush into declaring independence.

"Don't look at any proposed changes as a betrayal of our mission," Kuo said. "Our platform is outdated and has negative effects. It gives the public the misconception that we want to overthrow the status quo."

Lawmaker Seng Fu-Hsiung agreed changes are needed.

"Most voters back the DPP's various reforms but are reluctant to support us because our platform leaves them with fears," he said.

"We are obligated to change its wording to show that we are a responsible party."

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — As two Khmer Rouge leaders continued their luxury tour of Cambodia Sunday, a local analyst warned the arresting the two and bringing them to trial will be extremely difficult once they are on their home turf.

Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, two of late Khmer Rouge chief Pol Pot's most trusted lieutenants, flew by army helicopter to northwestern Battambang on Sunday after a government-sponsored tour of the famous temples of Angkor Wat.

Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, two of late Khmer Rouge chief Pol Pot's most trusted lieutenants, flew by army helicopter to northwestern Battambang on Sunday after a government-sponsored tour of the famous temples of Angkor Wat.

The two rebels, who struck a deal with Prime Minister Hun Sen last week, are expected to move on next to Phnom Penh, a former rebel stronghold.

Phnom Penh is still under the control of other former Khmer Rouge leaders who cut their own deals with the government in 1996, and who served as intermediaries in the defection of Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea.

Although the thousands of guerrilla soldiers in Phnom Penh have pledged allegiance to Hun Sen's government, it remains a united and heavily armed force that has never had its loyalty to Phnom Penh tested.

Should a move be made to arrest their longtime leaders, it remains unclear whether Phnom Penh's semi-autonomous administration would relent or resist.

No one knows where their loyalties lie. Not even the government knows for sure," said Kao Kim Houn, the head of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, a local think-tank.

"It is going to be difficult to get them back to Phnom Penh."

Since their highly publicised

surrender, Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea have been on a government-arranged tour of the country they turned into vast gulag of slave labour camps in an ill-fated attempt to create an agrarian utopia.

Hun Sen has waffled on his support for trying the Khmer Rouge leaders for their role in the deaths of as many as 2 million people during the group's brutal 1975-79 rule.

Initially Hun Sen told Cambodians to forget about a tribunal for the sake of peace, but as calls for justice mounted, the prime minister renewed his support by saying Friday that the genocidal regime of Pol Pot must be punished."

Kao Kim Houn said the conflicting statements show that Cambodians and the international community will have to keep up the pressure on Hun Sen if a tribunal is to be convened for the ageing guerrilla chiefs.

"Justice will not come easy," said Kao Kim Houn. "The pressure must come from within and without."

Even if work toward a tribunal continues, apprehending Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Phnom Penh leader Seng Lary, who defected to the government in 1996, will be extremely difficult if the three refuse to leave former rebel areas, he said.

Decisions on a tribunal are not expected to be made until after a United Nations report on the matter is completed at the end of the month.

At the request of Cambodia's leaders, a trio of U.N.-appointed legal experts visited Cambodia in November to examine evidence against the Khmer Rouge and assess the possibility of bringing senior leaders of the group to trial.

In Chicago, winds gusting up to 100 kilometres per hour forced city officials to close the scenic Lake Shore Drive along Lake Michigan as between 30 and 50 centimetres of snow blanketed the metropolitan area.

It is one of the four most devastating blizzards to hit Chicago since records began in 1885, and the worst since 1979, officials said.

"This is a major storm, and the clean-up will take time, perhaps days," said Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. "Our trucks will not be able to start seriously clearing streets until the snow stops and the wind dies down, hopefully sometime Sunday," he added.

Temperatures Sunday hovered around minus 6 Celsius, but with wind chill temperatures dropped to minus 28 Celsius.

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Fighting in the northern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where rebels are battling pro-government forces, has driven hundreds of refugees into the Central African Republic, state radio said Sunday.

The radio said about 1,000 fleeing civilians had crossed the Oubangui river from DRC to seek shelter in the CAR's capital, Bangui, and that more were gathering at the port security post in the morning.

Some told AFP that DRC rebels Thursday captured the town of Gomeni, about 150 kilometres southeast of Bangui, from soldiers backing President Laurent Kabila. The insurgents had since advanced to within 50

kilometres of Bangui.

Kabila's troops looted the town across the river from the Central African capital before abandoning Zongo, and some of the DRC soldiers crossed to Bangui with the refugees, according to missionary sources in the city.

The situation in the north of the DRC was "very serious from a humanitarian point of view," the director of the Roman Catholic radio station, Notre Dame de Bangui, said.

Representatives of the

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were due Sunday to make contact with the civilians who have fled. Most have rejected any suggestion of repatriation, an AFP correspondent reported.

The conflict in the DRC began with a rebellion in the east in August last year and has directly drawn in at least six other African countries on the military front: Rwanda and Uganda on the rebel side, and Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Chad in support of Kabila.

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Anchoring the Madaba Plains Project, Tell el-'Umayri emerges as one of Jordan's most formidable townsites

(Note: This is the first of three articles on the excavations at Tell el-'Umayri and associated surveys and smaller excavations, within the context of the Madaba Plains Project. Today's article focuses on the earliest Bronze Age towns at the site; the second article next week concentrates on the important Iron Age towns; the third article looks at the Classical period and later evidence, and the results of regional surveys and excavations, including evidence for a thriving wine industry in the Iron Age.)

AN ANTIQUITY site that dramatically reflects the rich archaeological record of human civilisation that is still preserved beneath the earth and sand of Jordan is a massive, easily accessible, but largely unknown site on the doorstep of Amman — the hilltop remains of Tell el-'Umayri, eleven kilometres south of Amman at the highway turnoff to Amman National Park.

Excavations here since 1984 have uncovered the superimposed remains of some 20 ancient towns, including half a dozen walled towns from pivotal historical periods which have left us few if any urban remains in Jordan.

Tell el-'Umayri is important — some would even say unique — in Jordan because its most significant and best preserved remains date from two eras that are not particularly well documented in Jordan — the Bronze and Iron Ages (c. 3000-500 BC), which together comprise that long stretch of historical time known as the Old Testament biblical period. No other single site in the country includes such well preserved cultural and architectural remains from these four pivotal eras:

— the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (c. 3300-1500 BC), when walled towns and urban civilisation first emerged in this region and the world as a whole; — the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200 BC), from which no other site in Jordan has produced such well preserved architecture;

— the Iron Age I (c. 1200-918 BC), the period of "the beginning of kingship in the land of Jordan, when local tribal groups were beginning to settle down"; and,

— the Iron II-Persian periods (918-332 BC), when the Ammonite kingdom flourished and then gave way to Assyrian, The MPP is sponsored by Andrews University (Michigan, U.S.), in consortium with Canadian University College, La Sierra University, and Walla Walla College.

The Tell el-'Umayri Project is directed by Lorry G. Herr, Douglas R. Clark, and Warren C. Trenhard, with La Sierra University President and former MPP director Lawrence Geraty acting as senior consultant (Dr Geraty's ambition to start the work at Tell el-'Umayri was heavily inspired by a desire to push the study of the cultural history of the region further back in time, after the Hisban dig had revealed only scanty remains from the Iron Age, and nothing earlier than that).

The project has also received the active cooperation, support, and advice of Dr Rauof AbuJaber, whose family owns the land of the site; he also contributed a study of the modern history of the region of 'Umayri, with emphasis on the history

Babylonian, and Persian control.

Also, few other antiquities sites in Jordan have enjoyed such long-term and multi-sectoral examination, which allows the archaeologists, geologists, and others working there to painstakingly piece together many different aspects of this region's ancient history — from military fortifications, religious architecture and burial practices, to political relations, ancient scripts, and food consumption habits. And finally, this important site is ideally placed to become a modern archaeological park, for it is strategically located on a main highway within easy access of several million Jordanians, many of whom pass by it on the highway or on their way to the adjacent park areas.

Archaeologists, workers, and scholars

of the AbuJaber farmstead at Yadoodeh (now converted to the restaurant/handicrafts facility known as Kan Zaman).

The site of Tell el-'Umayri is still being investigated and is not yet prepared for visitors, but it is easily viewed from the paved road linking the airport highway with Amman National Park (the impressive Bronze and Iron Age fortifications are on the west side of the hill, and can be best viewed from the entrance to Amman National Park). Plans are underway to develop facilities and explanations for Jordanian and international visitors (as was done so successfully earlier this year at Tell Hisban).

The first inhabitants

The first humans or human-like ancestors who lived in the region around Tell el-'Umayri were people who made and used stone tools during the Palaeolithic or Stone Age period — between 40,000 and nearly two million years ago. Hand axes, blades, and flint tools from several different Stone Age periods were found in several sites within five kilometres of the tell — probably used by people who were attracted to a seasonal lake in the vicinity of the airport highway's Nu'ur turnoff. Among the well identified specimens are Acheulean handaxes from over one million years ago, Laiyalis-Mousterian tools from nearly 100,000 years ago, and Neolithic stone tools from 3000-5000 BC.

The earliest settled population so far documented at Tell el-'Umayri comprised villagers from the Chalcolithic period (4500-3300 BC) who lived in the valley east of the tell — now buried beneath the airport highway.

The first town

The first exploitation of the tell itself was documented in the form of Early Bronze Age domestic structures on the summit of the hill, along with a fascinating dolmen burial complex on its south-eastern slope. The oldest known structure to date, from around 3000 BC, is the large dolmen — a tomb made of three massive standing stone slabs covered by a single, large horizontal slab. More than 20 humans were buried in the dolmen, which was also

unusual for having seven floors, one on top of the other, immediately outside the tomb itself.

Dr Larry Herr of Canadian University College suggests that "this shows that the people living at the site celebrated funerary rites at the dolmen long after the burials had begun." This is the first dolmen in the entire Mediterranean basin to produce multiple burials, complete pottery vessels (20), and numerous external surfaces.

Also excavated from the earliest settlement were house complexes with several rooms and ceramic vessels on the floors, revealing different aspects of people's daily routines in the Early Bronze Age III period (around 2700-2500 BC, just before the biblical patriarchal period of Abraham). Many domestic artefacts were found in this area, including Cucanian flint blades, spindle whorls, a bone spatula, a mortar and pestle, and other grinding stones.

Among the domestic items found in the houses were storage jars, containing large quantities of chickpeas (garbanzos), lentils, wheat, barley, radishes, squash, olives, grapes and other fruits and vegetables. Perhaps the town residents also ate little meat, to judge by the small amounts of bones found. Other parts of the houses had courtyard areas with cobble floors, huts, ashes, and other evidence of cooking and animal husbandry, along with wide benches and sunken hearths full of ashes.

Some signs suggest that the people from this period may have been fairly prosperous. For example one family rebuilt its house several times. A small storage cave was dug into the bedrock of a house. Six different phases of the settlement's life have been identified during the EB II and III period (c. 3000-2300 BC). This earliest settlement was probably unwalled, protected only by some terrace walls that also served as house walls; some obvious if rudimentary "town planning" grouped the houses into blocks of dwellings separated by passageways and terraces, said Dr Douglas Clark of Walla Walla College.

The Middle Bronze Age

The settlement remains from the next historical period are among the most significant at this site and in all Jordan —

remains of a Middle Bronze Age (about 1600 BC) walled town with massive fortifications. One partially excavated building was made of very large stones, located near the summit and deep beneath later buildings. Other MB remains include the foundations of a tower on a five-meter-high earthen rampart, and a well-plastered water pool that may be the only one known from this period in all Jordan.

Imported items have been identified from Egypt, Turkey and other regional locations, indicating that the people of Tell el-'Umayri were part of a relatively large-scale commercial trading network.

"The Middle Bronze Age is a time when very few settlements existed south of Amman on the Jordanian plateau. To find such substantial remains from such a rare period was unexpected," Dr Herr said in a recent interview at Tell el-'Umayri.

Late Bronze Age

Just north of the MB ruins the excavators uncovered a two-room building from the Late Bronze Age (1500-1300 BC). Unlike any others at Tell el-'Umayri, the unique walls of this building are constructed of flat stones that resemble mud-bricks, and stand over three meters high. The two identified floor levels were both covered with a thick layer of burned bricks and wood, suggesting that the structure (and the settlement) were destroyed during an attack, either by an invading army or local enemies.

"Jordan has even fewer remains from the Late Bronze Age than from the Middle Bronze Age. This remarkably well preserved building is the only one of its kind and date so far found in this part of Jordan," Dr Herr said. A few other architectural remains from the Late Bronze Age have been excavated in other parts of the country, including north of Amman and in the Jordan Valley.

Formidable fortifications

The rampart fortification system from the end of the Middle Bronze Age is clearly visible at the western edge of the mound, and is one of the most important aspects of this dig. For reasons still unclear, the MB residents of the town clearly felt that

Our Ancient Heritage A Jordan Times Series



By Rami G. Khouri

they needed better protection than the previous Early Bronze Age inhabitants who had lived in an open, unfortified town. The more vulnerable MB occupants of the site dug a north-south moat across the bedrock ridge on the west side of the site, measuring some five meters deep and six meters wide at the bottom. This was the most vulnerable side of the settlement, and required such protective measures to ward off hostile attacks.

From the eastern bottom of the moat, the town's defence engineers built an earthen rampart at an upward slope of 25-30 degrees for 30 meters, some ten meters higher than the bottom of the moat. The combination of moat and steeply sloping rampart "made a significant barrier to attacking forces from the ridge to the west," according to Dr Herr. He adds that "no sign of a rampart construction has been found on the other sides of the hill where perhaps the natural slopes of the hill were sufficient protection."

Crucial water source

The Tell el-'Umayri settlement's ancient water source was a spring located near the base of the northern slope. This was the only reliable year-round water source between Amman and Madaba, and may help to explain the siting of the earliest town and the successive settlements throughout the 3000 years of the Bronze and Iron ages. Around the area of the spring the excavators discovered walls, plaster floors, a large, stone-built shaft, a stone arch, a channel or tunnel, and pottery from several different periods; the pottery indicates that the water source was used during the Early Bronze, Iron II/early Persian, Roman, and Byzantine periods.

Indian perfumers fight to preserve legacy

By Abhik Kumar Chanda

Agence France Presse

INDIAN PERFUMERS are fighting a losing battle to preserve a 3,000-year-old tradition of natural fragrances which can reputedly soothe nerves, cure ailments and pep up one's love life.

Producers and sellers of attar, which became wildly popular in medieval times under Moghul rule, say an onslaught of Western-style perfumes, rising prices of ingredients and changing tastes, are leading to its demise.

Ram Singh, New Delhi's leading attar seller, sits in a tiny shop in a medieval quarter near the city's oldest mosque. Set up in 1816, the outlet



Modern perfume is threatening a 3,000-year-old tradition (file photo)

uses in a labyrinthine alley resembling an Arab souk or market.

Singh says the nature of attar products, based on floral extracts mixed in pure aromatic oils like sandalwood, make them far more expensive than synthetic perfumes.

Ruh Gulab (rosewater), the most expensive attar we sell, costs 5,000 rupees (\$120) for 10 grams. One kilogramme of Ruh Gulab is extracted from four tonnes of fresh rose petals.

These perfumes are not meant for bulk. They are personal perfumes. They were used by the kings, the nobility who are not there any more.

The new generation does not know about attar. Our buyers are traditional people," Singh said, adding that the only celebrity customer he could remember was Sonia Gandhi, the widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Blossom Kochchar, a leading Indian cosmetics manufacturer who exports natural perfumes to Europe and the United States, says attar — mentioned in the Hindu Veda scriptures of around 1000 B.C. — were used as tranquillizers, medicines and aphrodisiacs.

"They create a certain mood," Kochchar, a well-known aromatherapist, said, adding that one attar variety "acts as a cooler and cures asthma," while jasmine attar "gives a person confidence and gives birth to feelings of love.

Subcontinent in midst of AIDS crises AIDS scourge travels India by truck

By Gregory Beitchman

Reuters

JAGDISH SINGH drives his truckload of marble along the dusty Jupur-Delhi highway. As the sun sets, he stops at a ramshackle roadside cafe for a snack.

These roadside cafes, known as dhabas, are the closest thing to home for some drivers. They offer food, company — and sex. As night falls, prostitutes gather just behind the cafe in a dimly lit huddle of huts.

But what truck drivers see as a casual diversion has become one of the most common routes of transmission in India for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which leads to AIDS.

Filthy trucks line the road as hundreds of other drivers wait patiently for the ban on trucks in the Indian capital to be lifted at nine o'clock. Gurgaon, a town some 30 km from Delhi, is known as a transport hub.

Meanwhile, Singh eats a leathery circle of bread, a splash of lentil curd and pickles.

"Most drivers are having sex on board their trucks or at dhabas," he said, lighting up a cigarette.

"I really don't, but a lot of my friends like a bit of fun after they've eaten. The women from the slums can earn some money, the dhaba owner gets customers."

Outside New Delhi, the Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) has convinced at least one dhaba that if it doesn't help stop HIV, its customers could disappear.

"Drivers are away from their families 25 to 26 days a month," said Rumesh Kumar, director of SPYM, which

promotes education about Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or AIDS.

"They have a natural urge for sex, and let's face it sex workers are available on the highway... they're an easy target for the virus. It's frightening. Once they've got HIV, it follows them home, spreads to wives, children and so on." Above the aroma of frying garlic and spices from the kitchen of Rosy Dhaba, SPYM has set up a clinic where drivers can get treatment for sexual diseases, and learn a little about AIDS.

Counsellors say that up to 70 per cent of the men who walk into the clinic already have some kind of sexually transmitted disease, which can mean they are especially vulnerable to HIV infection.

"It's a matter of developing a relationship with the drivers, if we can develop trust then we can begin to advise on the real issues, like using condoms," In front of the restaurant, counsellors demonstrate condom use to a group of drivers who nervously sip cups of tea.

The condoms cost only one rupee (2.5 U.S. cents) for 10, but price is not the issue.

"I take fistfuls of condoms and force them to take away," says Kumar. "They're like kids when we talk about sex."

"Most don't think twice about it, which is the problem. If these men would talk to their wives about sex, they might have a better experience, and not bother with what the road offers." Studies say millions of Indians

have contracted the AIDS virus and that most of them are not aware that they are HIV positive.

Officials concede the number of cases is growing.

"We are trying to estimate the number, but the prevalence is varying from state to state, so the figure could be somewhere between three to four million cases," said Prasad Rao, director of the National AIDS Control Organisation.

A government study carried out in four states found rates of HIV infection as high as 23.62 per 1,000.

Government statistics show that most HIV transmission in India has been through heterosexual sex rather than homosexual relations or sharing of contaminated needles by drug abusers.

While deaths from the virus are still low, medical officials say treating sick patients will be the next challenge.

Expensive combinations of anti-viral drugs developed in the United States and Europe have reduced deaths from AIDS by as much as 80 per cent in the Western world. In India most of these drugs are too expensive for ordinary people.

"These drugs are freely available in the market and we have abolished customs duty on them... for those who have the money they can buy it in the market," Rao said. "But to make it freely available would be impossible because these drugs are expensive to start with."

United Nations AIDS experts say that without effective steps to check the spread of the virus, AIDS could become as prevalent in India as in Africa, where many millions are infected. Experts say that by 2000, one in four HIV infections worldwide will be in Asia.

By Shakespeare Shil

Reuters

Bangladesh faces AIDS explosion

By Shakespeare Shil

Reuters

a national crisis at the dawn of a new millennium.

"The cumulative number of HIV/AIDS cases...now stands at 105 and projections about undetected infection run from 20,000 to 30,000."

But in Bangladesh, whose 120 million people regularly deal with natural catastrophes like floods and hurricanes, the silent spread of the virus has so far gone largely unnoticed.

The vast majority of carriers go undetected, because the stigma of AIDS is acute in Bangladesh where sexual matters are seldom openly discussed.

"HIV has touched the core of the population of Bangladesh and the experience of neighbouring countries suggests that only one to two years are enough to send the prevalence up to an epidemic level," said Nazrul Islam, secretary of the National AIDS Committee, which advises the government.

He called for a quick response, based on growing infection rates in neighbouring India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand.

Poverty and a subculture of intravenous drug users also make Bangladesh fertile ground for HIV, experts say. Islam believes sex is the main route of transmission as elsewhere.

Health care centres can get screening equipment.

Bangladeshis who have worked overseas make up more than one-third of the country's known HIV carriers. About 74,000 Bangladeshis go abroad to work each year. Many of the men use prostitutes and when they return pass HIV on to their wives.

The first confirmed AIDS case in Bangladesh was a sailor who died in 1990, and gave the virus to his wife. Prevention efforts date back 10 years, but to date have been low key.

IMF seeking broader role to cope with crises

WASHINGTON (R) — Big-
ger central bank reserves,
more transparent financial
systems and an enhanced role
for the International Monetary
Fund (IMF) are possible
responses to last year's financial
crises, a senior IMF official said Sunday.

IMF First Deputy Managing
Director Stanley Fischer said countries with large
reserves had, by and large,
coped better with the turmoil
than those with smaller ones,
and this was likely to prompt
countries to rethink their
reserve policy.

But efforts by emerging
market economies to create
current account surpluses to
build up reserves could have
a deflationary impact on the
world economy, he said.

"While volatility and con-
tango will always be with us,
we can surely do better in
reducing the frequency and
intensity of emerging market
financial crisis, and the extent
of contagion, than we have in
the last five years," he added.

The IMF admits it was
caught by surprise at the
speed with which national
financial problems spread.

and at the way in which a crisis
which started 18 months
ago in Thailand became a
plague infecting almost all
the developing world.

The fund responded with a
string of international rescue
deals, using its own money
and cash from other lenders
to try to prevent the problems
getting out of hand.

Economic output is slowing
around the world, although
the IMF's last World Economic
Outlook, released last
month, still sees world
growth of 2.2 per cent this
year.

Fischer said he expected
fewer pegged exchange rates
in the future as countries
drew lessons from problems
in Asia.

"The virulence of the recent
crisis is likely to shift the bal-
ance toward the choice of
more flexible exchange rate
systems, including crawling
pegs with wide bands," he
said.

He added the IMF could
build on its latest experiences
to become an international
lender of last resort — like a
national central bank which
can provide unlimited funds

to a bank which has short-
term problems and can pro-
vide collateral.

"I would argue that the
IMF, although it is not an
international central bank,
has undertaken certain impor-
tant lender of last resort func-
tions in the current system —
and that role can be made
more effective in a reformed
international financial system," he said.

Long-standing proposals
for reform include more
openness about transactions
of central banks and others,
better rules on banks and
bankruptcy and efforts to
"bail in" the private sector to
ensure private lenders share
the burden of rescuing coun-
tries which get into financial
trouble.

"In light of the above
revenue and expenditure esti-
mates, the estimated deficit for
the 1999 budget amounts to
\$631 million, more than double
the 1998 budget deficit, mainly due to
lower oil prices on world markets.

"The minister said the government
had ordered custom duties on vehicles with small
engines to be doubled to 10 per
cent and raised duties on
bigger-engined vehicles to 15 per
cent.

Oman's 1999 budget slashes spending, revenues

MUSCAT (R) — Oman's 1999 budget, forecasts rev-
enues at 1.525 billion riyals

and spending of 2.156 billion,
both lower than the previous
year's projection.

Economy Minister Ahmad

Ben Abdal Nabi Mekki said
the 1999 budget deficit was
expected to reach 631 million
riyals, more than double the
1998 budget deficit, mainly due to
lower oil prices on world markets.

Mekki said the 1999 budget
was based on an oil price of \$9
per barrel and projected rev-
enue of 902 million riyals from
oil exports. He said Oman saw
no improvement in oil prices
during the next two years.

Gas revenues in the 1999
budget were forecast at 73 mil-
lion riyals and non-oil income
was forecast at 550 million
riyals. Oman is a medium-
sized non-OPEC oil producer,
originally forecast at 29 mil-
lion riyals, stood at 31 million
riyals at the end of December
as Oman's oil prices fell by "an
equivalent of 50 per cent," he
said.

The minister said the figures
could change slightly when
final accounts are made at the
end of the fiscal year in March.

He said the government had
ordered a seven per cent cut
across the board in public
spending and was taking other
measures to increase non-oil
revenues.

Oman's 1999 budget had
forecast revenue of 2.012 billion
riyals and spending of

2.307 billion.

He said the government
might have to resort to "with-
drawals from the State General
Reserve Fund (SGRF) in case oil
revenue doesn't improve
during the year."

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spending and was taking other
measures to increase non-oil
revenues.

Oman was also raising cor-
porate taxes to 12 per cent
from 7.5 per cent now, the
minister added.

The budget allocated an esti-
mated 422 million riyals for

health, education and social
security and about 205 million
riyals for development pro-
jects.

Israel expects to benefit from euro

JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel
expects the arrival of the euro,
the single European currency,
to boost its economy by cutting
the costs of imports and helping
exports.

The entry of the euro is
expected to have a positive
effect on Israel's economy,"
Ben-Zion Zimmele, director
general of the Israeli finance
ministry, said in a statement.

He said the ministry expected
the euro to increase competi-
tion among European manu-
facturers and therefore lower
the cost of imports from the
European Union into Israel.

In addition, the ministry
expects the new currency to
stimulate growth across
Europe and boost what is
already Israel's largest export
market.

Syrian exports fall sharply

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syria's
public sector exports plunged
29 per cent in the first three
quarters of 1998 compared
with the same period in 1997,
the government newspaper
Tishrin reported Sunday.

It said the exports netted

\$1.7 billion in the first nine
months of 1998, down from
\$2.4 billion in the year-earlier
period.

The government's export
target was \$2 billion in 1998.

The paper said the decline
was largely due to the drop in

world oil prices. It said Syrian
oil exports had fallen to \$856
million from \$1.1 billion in
the nine-month period.

It said oil, oil products, cot-
ton and wheat make up more
than three-quarters of Syria's
exports.

An international company seeks a suitable candidate for the following vacancy for its operations in Jordan

Human Resources & Development Manager

Responsibilities:

The successful candidate will have the responsibility to support management in the design development, Implementation of the organisation structure, policies and procedures, develop staffing plans and coordinate recruitment, develop and implement annual training plans, develop and implement salary administration programme and coordinate with related government agencies.

Qualifications:

The successful candidate will hold a Bachelor's degree from a reputable university, have 5 to 7 years of progressive experience in Human Resources, be able to interact with employees at all levels of the organisation and fluent in spoken and written Arabic and English.

Successful candidate will receive a competitive remuneration package.

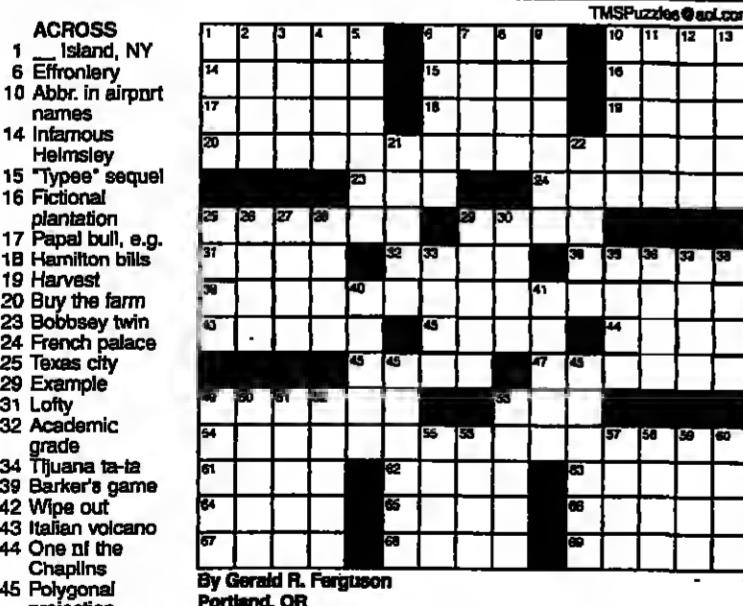
Qualified candidates should send their CV with a recent photograph to:

H.R.
P.O. Box 9847
Amman 11191 — Jordan

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSpuzzles@aol.com



By Gerald R. Ferguson

Portland, OR

9 Setbacks

10 Attrition

11 Nostril

12 Figurative use

13 Period of

14 Infamous

15 "Typee" sequel

16 Fictional

17 Sepulchral, e.g.

18 Hamilton bills

19 Harvest

20 Buy the farm

21 Bobrovsk twin

22 French

23 Texan

24 Example

25 Lorry

26 Academic

27 Grade

28 Ilioumena ta-ta

29 Barker's game

30 Wipe out

31 Italian volcano

32 One of the

33 Chaplins

34 Polygynous

35 Projection

36 Extremist

37 Cause

38 Kesy or Follett

39 Money

40 Moran of

41 "Happy Days"

42 Metric

43 Measure,

44 Briefly

45 Nice farewell?

46 On a cruise

47 Component

48 Art category

49 More limited

50 amount

51 Favoured ones

52 Foe

53 Island, NY

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57 Infamous

58 Helmley

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60 "Happy Days"

61 Metric

62 Measure,

63 Briefly

64 On a cruise

65 Component

66 Art category

67 More limited

68 amount

69 Favoured ones

70 Foe

71 AC/DC power

72 Swan song

73 Lane of the

74 Daily Planet

75 shiny fabrics

76 Boarded

77 Congregation

78 Feedback

79 Heater

80 Spanish lariat

81 ranger

82 Word with etar

83 Fully full

84 Setback

85 Comparable

86 Christian of

87 fashion

88 Composer

89 Stravinsky

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Researcher points out main areas of weakness in the tourism sector

INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE and unqualified tourist guides and cadres working in the tourism sector combined with a weak comprehensive drive to promote Jordan internationally are all considered a factor delaying growth in this vital and important sector of the economy, according to a thorough study.

Prepared by Nisreen Barakat, a researcher at the Ministry of Planning, the study indicated that the average stay of a tourist in Jordan is only four days. "The tourist comes within a tourism package for the region as a whole and visits specific areas that have been oversaturated with promotional campaigns," she said.

Barakat pointed out that tourism accounts for 50 per cent of the hard currencies entering the Jordanian market. She explained that 1.1 million tourists visit Jordan each year and that they spend about \$770 million which translate into \$698 per tourist. The researcher indicated that on average a tourist spends \$175 a day in Jordan noting that Israel earns a total of \$2.8 billion from tourism each year and Egypt a total of \$3.2 billion. Barakat said a tourist spends \$1,335 during an 18-day stay on average.

She stressed the importance of influencing tourists to stay longer in Jordan by at least 25 per cent, or five days instead of four days so as tourism income would increase by the same rate. "Influencing tourists to stay longer in Jordan requires higher spending on the tourism sector especially in fields of promotion and rehabilitation/training cadres."

Barakat highlighted in the study the weakness of Jordan's tourism transport which resulted from a consortium among the three transport companies. She explained that the consortium has eliminated competition and raised prices by 30 per cent without any justification. Moreover, Barakat added, the law which required a JD10 million capital for any transport company has cancelled the element of competition in the tourism transport sector and restricted it to a specific type.

She concluded by emphasising that the lack of clear information about the type of tourists visiting Jordan and what attracts them to Jordan is one of the most important elements that weaken the tourism sector (Al Dustour).

Government still unable to find mechanism to compensate treasury when customs are lifted on production inputs

THE GOVERNMENT is unable to reduce customs on production inputs before arriving at a mechanism to compensate the treasury for the loss of the revenue, Finance Minister Michel Marto said in an interview with Al Aswaaq. He admitted that the Jordanian industry has been harmed and that it deserves support to be able to compete with products from other countries which exempt production inputs from customs.

"We want to exempt production inputs from

age in Israel. She stressed the importance of influencing tourists to stay longer in Jordan by at least 25 per cent, or five days instead of four days so as tourism income would increase by the same rate. "Influencing tourists to stay longer in Jordan requires higher spending on the tourism sector especially in fields of promotion and rehabilitation/training cadres."

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"The big surprise was the strength of consumer spending," said chief economist John Lipsky at Chase Manhattan.

The U.S. economy stayed on 1997's upward trend, growing at a yearly four per cent clip even as Asia sank into an economic crisis that also hit Russia hard, and rocked Latin America.

"In November 1997 there was a lot of disagreement over the real impact of the Asian crisis," said Lipsky. "Today there is little dis-

Consumer spending drives U.S. stocks up 16%

NEW YORK (AFP) — Wall Street owes thanks to U.S. consumers for helping drive the stock market higher in 1998 with little more than a hiccup from the global financial crisis.

The New York Stock Exchange's main barometer, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, was up 16.1 per cent on the year at 9,181.43 points, less than 200 points from the historic high it reached on Nov. 23.

This year's strong extended 1997's striking 23 per cent gain.

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Dolphins beat Bills, Cowboys lose in Dallas

MIAMI (AP) — Trace Armstrong sacked Buffalo quarterback Doug Flutie and forced a fumble with nine seconds remaining, enabling the Miami Dolphins to hang on for a 24-17 victory Saturday and sending them to the next round of the American National Football League playoffs.

Shane Burton recovered the ball on Miami's 3 yard line and Dolphins coach Jimmy Johnson won in the post-season for the first time since his Dallas Cowboys beat the Bills in the 1994 Super Bowl.

The game was the first of two "wild-card" playoff games Saturday. Arizona upset the Cowboys in Dallas 20-7 later Saturday.

Miami's opponent next weekend will depend on Sunday's Jacksonville-New England game. If the Jaguars win, the Dolphins will play at Denver. If the Patriots win, the Dolphins will play the Jets in New York.

The Bills, who trailed 24-14, got a 33-yard field goal by Steve Christie with 1:33 left, then recovered an onside kick and drove 64 yards to the Miami 5 in 10 plays.

Flutie, on first down, pumped to throw once and then cocked him arm again, but was leveled by Armstrong, knocking the ball loose.

The Dolphins earned their first playoff victory in four years and beat a team that ended their season three times in this decade.

The Bills came from behind twice, but couldn't overcome five turnovers and 93 yards in penalties. Eric Moulds' nine receptions for 240 yards — an NFL playoff record — weren't enough, either.

Miami's Karim Abdul-Jabbar rushed for 95 yards and the Dolphins controlled the ball for 37 minutes thanks to scoring marches of 57, 66, 77 and 50 yards. Each drive took at least eight plays.

Flutie, playing in his first NFL playoff game in 12 years, went 21-for-36 for 360 yards and touchdown. But, ahead 7-6, he threw an interception at the goal line late in the first half.

• Cardinals 20, Cowboys 7: In Irving, Texas, Jake "The Snake" Plummer, who recently negotiated a \$29 million contract that included a

\$15 million signing bonus, threw two touchdown passes and led the heavy underdog Cardinals to their first post-season victory since 1947.

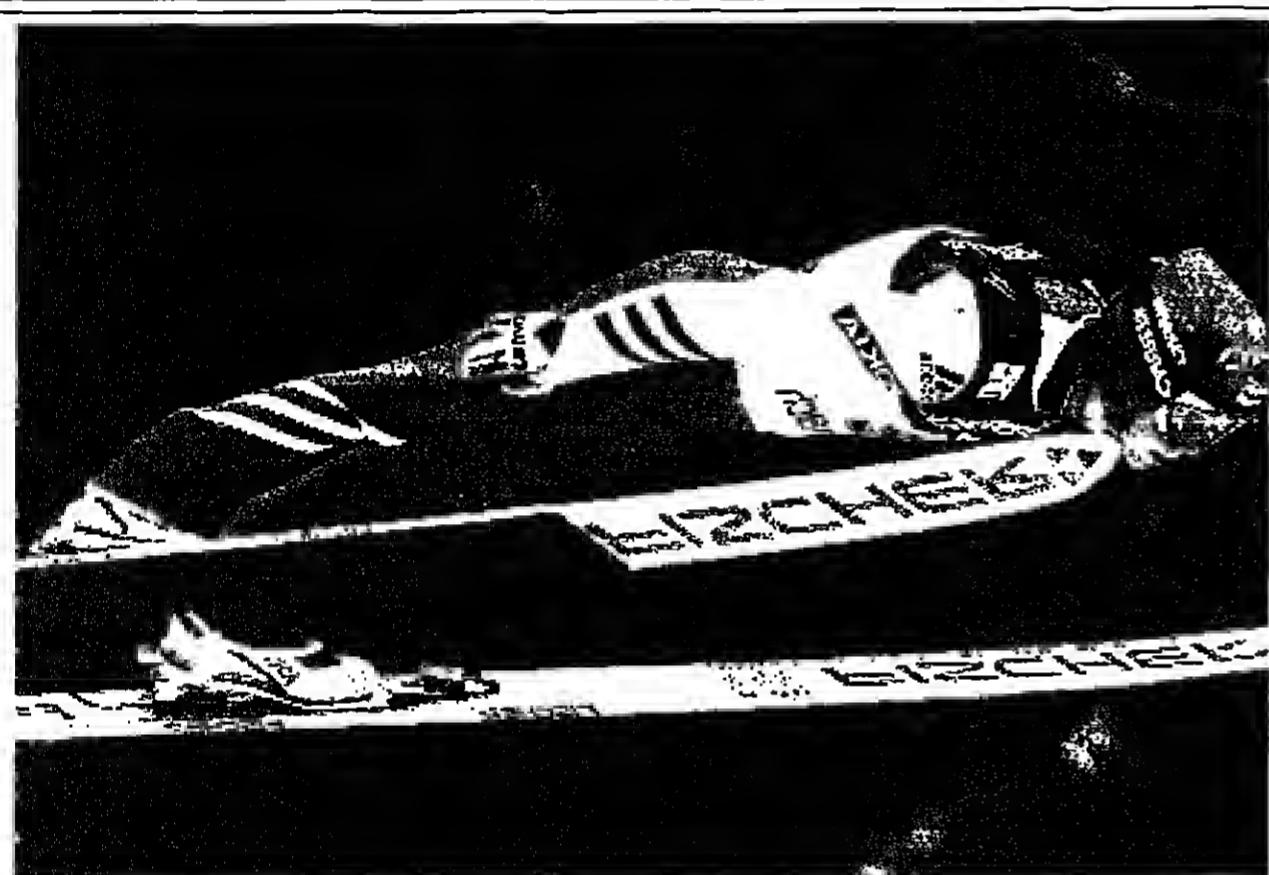
Arizona's low-rated defence stymied the Cowboys, who were shut out until the final four minutes of the NFC wild-card game.

The Cardinals, playing in the NFC playoffs for the first time since 1982, will meet the NFC Central champion Minnesota Vikings in the second-round next Sunday. Minnesota had the league's best record, 15-1, while Arizona was 9-7.

Dallas beat the Cardinals twice in the regular season, but Plummer showed no playoff nerves in the third meeting.

Arizona, which led 10-0 at halftime,

shocked the playoff-hardened Cowboys to start the second half on a 74-yard run by Adrian Murrell, followed by a 3-yard touchdown pass by Plummer to a wide-open Larry Centers. The run was the longest against the Cowboys in their 52-game playoff history.



Jaakko Tallas of Finland is airborne on his way to win the ski jumping competition during the Nordic Combined World Cup event in Schonach. With jumps over 92 and 92.5 metres he gained 250.0 points to lead the competitors field ahead of tomorrow's 15 kilometres cross-country run. Tallas won the ski jumping ahead of Czech Jan Matura and Norwegian Olympic Champion Bjarte Engen Vik (AFP photo)

Fernandez looking for 'springboard' to get back to form

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Former World No. 4 Mary Joe Fernandez said Sunday she was looking at the Auckland Classic as a "springboard" back to form from a wrist injury last year.

"I only played eight tournaments last year and I need a lot of matches to get back into form. This tournament is very much a springboard for me to get going again," she said.

The World No. 77 is drawn to face seventh seed and World No. 35 Chanda Rubin in her first round match Monday. The 27-year-old two-time Australian Open finalist and one-time finalist at the French Open, said her match against Rubin would be tough.

"She is a dangerous player and has a really big forehand. I will have to play my way if I am to win the match," Fernandez said.

Defending champion Dominique Van Roost said she was pleased to have avoided Fernandez first

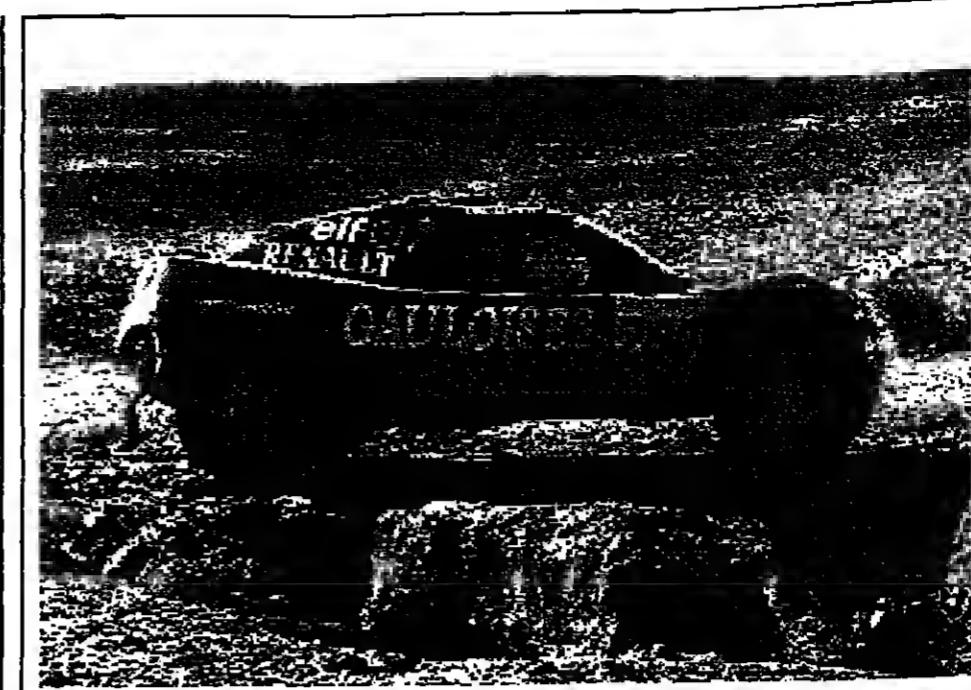


Mary Joe Fernandez

up. "I really didn't want to play her in the first round because she is very tough," Van Roost said.

"It is going to be hard even without playing her first up because the cutoff is quite low and the quality of the players here has improved again."

The Belgian World No. 11 will face World No. 59 Rita Grande, of Italy, in her opening match.



The French team of Jean-Louis Schlesser and Philippe Monnet in their Schlesser buggy take the rutted road during the special stage Rahat-Agadir, during the Granada-Dakar Rally (AFP photo)

Blatter favours World Cup revolution

GENEVA (AFP) — The World Cup should be held every two years, football's top official Sepp Blatter was Sunday reported as saying.

The proposed change would revolutionise the face of international football.

The Zurich weekly SonntagsBlick reported that Blatter, president of the sport's world governing body FIFA, backs a plan which would mean World Cups being held every even year.

Teams would qualify through continental rankings and qualifying competitions would be scrapped, the paper said.

Blatter reportedly favours continental championships being held in odd years with the leading sides on each continent advancing to a World Cup to be held the following year.

Blatter, who was elected FIFA president last June, said his proposals were a reaction to media tycoons across Europe, including Italian Silvio Berlusconi, who are pressing for a European super league of top clubs.

He said he was afraid that if the league went ahead clubs would be unwilling to release their international stars to national teams. A competition every two years would give national sides the "status they deserve," he said.

Blatter added: "I am demanding a clear statement: Do we want national teams or do we only want club football?"

Blatter said the World Cup was a proven success. "The success of the World Cup is unique," he said.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

French sailors take grip on Around Alone yacht race

AUCKLAND (AFP) — French sailors were in almost total command of the challenging Around Alone yacht race which reached its halfway point here Sunday. Frenchwoman Isabelle Autissier finished third in the second leg here Sunday and in the process secured herself the lead overall. Organisers say that on total elapsed time Autissier now has a 5hr 57min 59sec lead over fellow Frenchman March Thiercelin and a 24hr 10min 19sec advantage over Italian Giovanni Soldini, who won the second leg. Jean-Pierre Mouligne of France is expected to arrive here early Monday to win the Class II section.

Dundee United ease relegation fears

GLASGOW (AFP) — Dundee United eased their relegation fears with a 3-1 victory at city rivals Dundee in the Scottish Premier League on Saturday. Goals from Billy Dodds and Stevie Thompson inside the first 16 minutes put United in the driving seat but Dundee rallied as Shaun McSkimming pulled a goal back after 28 minutes. Brian Irvine smacked a header against the bar on the hour only for United to grab a third against the run of play 10 minutes later through Kjell Olofsson. The result meant second-from-bottom United closed to within a point of Dundee, a place above them. Elsewhere mid-table Hearts could only draw 0-0 at bottom side Dunfermline, while St Johnstone thumped visiting Aberdeen 4-1, helped by two second-half goals from John O'Neil. Leaders Rangers, who have a three-point advantage over Kilmarnock at the top, take on bitter Glasgow rivals Celtic at Ibrox on Sunday. Victory would put Rangers 13 points clear of third-placed Celtic.

Defending champion Fontenay leads in Paris-Dakar rally

AGADIR (AFP) — France's defending champion Jean-Pierre Fontenay won the special stage on the second day of the Paris-Dakar rally here on Saturday to climb to the top of the car standings. Fontenay, with co-driver Gilles Picard, was third overnight but had a superb day in the 654km run from Rahat to Agadir. Fontenay's Mitsubishi is now 1min 49sec ahead of Japan's Kenjiro Shinozuka following his win in the special stage, run over 99.5km in the Khatouat region, 130km east of Casablanca. Austria's Heinz Kinigadner, who has just had a year off, leads in the moto section. On Sunday, the 510km third stage from Agadir to Tan Tan has a 230km special.

Survey: Newcastle, Chelsea fans swear the most

LONDON (AFP) — Newcastle United and Chelsea have the fans with the foulest mouths in the English Premiership, it was reported on Saturday. A survey for the Sunday Mirror named St James's Park and Stamford Bridge as the top-flight grounds where visitors are most likely to hear swear-words and obscene chants. Researchers from the newspaper attended matches at every Premiership venue and ranked each one according to the amount of bad language they heard during a game and the coarseness of the swear-words used. Bottom of the paper's "league of shame" by a comfortable margin — with less than half the swearing found at Newcastle — was Charlton Athletic. A Newcastle United spokesman said the club was taking action over offensive language: "We have received complaints from fans about obscene and racist language. Anyone heard using it will have their season tickets taken off them." The Sunday Mirror's "league of shame": 1. Newcastle United, 2. Chelsea, 3. Everton, 4. West Ham United, 5. Leeds United, 6. Leicester City, 7. Sheffield Wednesday, 8. Aston Villa, 9. Arsenal, 10. Liverpool, 11. Derby County, 12. Manchester United, 13. Wimbledon, 14. Nottingham Forest, 15. Coventry City, 16. Tottenham Hotspur, 17. Middlesbrough, 18. Blackburn Rovers, 19. Blackburn Rovers, 20. Charlton Athletic.

Wiberg wins World Cup slalom

MARIBOR, Slovenia (AFP) — Swedish veteran Pernilla Wiberg produced a superb second leg to win the World Cup women's slalom race here on Sunday.

Wiberg, who was only ninth-fastest after the first leg, clocked a combined time of 1min 54.88sec. She finished 0.29sec ahead of Germany's Hilde Gerg with Yvonne of Sweden third 0.49 behind.

Wiberg, a 28-year-old former world champion and Olympic gold medalist who was plagued by injuries last year, recorded her first triumph of the season in desperately difficult conditions.

The snow at the Slovenian resort was slushy and the rutted, humpy course saw several of the favourites struggle.

American Kristina Koznick, second-fastest after the first leg, made a mistake at the top of the course and lost momentum, while Gerg held an advantage of almost two seconds over Wiberg after the first leg but skied too cautiously the second time and had to settle for second place.

On Saturday, Anita Wachter of Austria won a giant slalom race at the same venue while in-form Gerg took the Super-G honours.

Chang likely replacement for absent Sampras

SYDNEY (AFP) — Organisers of the Australian Open lead tennis event the Kooyong Classic have approached Michael Chang to fill the vacancy caused by the shock withdrawal of Pete Sampras.

Sampras stunned Australian tournament promoters when his management Saturday that he would not be playing in this month's Australian Open in Melbourne because of physical and mental exhaustion.

Colin Stubs, promoter of the Kooyong Classic, said Chang, a two-time winner of the event, was the original alternate player outside the eight-man field and he would be talking with the American over the next few days.

The Kooyong Classic, a round-robin event guaranteeing each player three matches on the Rebound Ace hardcourt surface, the same used for the Australian Open, has attracted a high-profile field from January 13-16.

The tournament features Andre Agassi, Thomas Enqvist, Tim Henman, Goran Ivanisevic, Mark Philippoussis, Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Petr Korda. The Australian Open gets underway in Melbourne on January 18.

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Watch out for the new play

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL: 463-4144

PHILADELPHIA '1'

Sean Connery & Nicholas Cage .. in

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Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 463-4144

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Meryl Streep & Kevin Bacon .. in

THE RIVER WILD

Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5699238

PLAZA

Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in

SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5677420

CONCORDE

CONCORDE "I"

Al Pacino & Robert De Niro .. in

HEAT

Shows: 6:30, 9:00

CONCORDE "II"

Adel Imam .. in

RISALA ILAL WALI

Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:15

CINEMA TEL: 5934793

GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN

www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Sharon Stone & Dustin Hoffman .. in

SPHERE

Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5934793

GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN

www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Helena Bonham & Linus Roache .. in

WINGS OF THE DOVE

Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.



LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Four countries confirmed for paralympics

AMMAN — Qatar, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen have announced their participation in First Arab Paralympics, which will be held here September 1999 following the Pan-Arab Games. The championship's Higher Organising Committee is expected to meet after 'Eid Al Fitr to discuss recent developments regarding the issue.

Squash federation to hire Pakistani coach

AMMAN — A Jordan Squash Federation source said the JSF is working on hiring a Pakistani coach to train the national team for the Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Amman Aug. 15-31, 1999. The source added that contacts were continuing between both sides and the trainer is scheduled to arrive here after the 'Eid holiday. Pakistan has dominated the world squash scene over the past decade and has high calibre players and coaches in the sport.

South Africa defeat Australia in Hopman Cup

PERTH (AFP) — South Africa whipped Australia 5-2-1 on the second day of the AS\$900,000 (\$550,620) Hopman Cup tennis mixed teams tournament here Sunday.

South Africa's Amanda Coetzer raced to victory in only 47 minutes over Australia's number one world junior, Jelena Dokic.

Before Wayne Ferreira beat Mark Philippoussis, also in straight sets.

In the women's singles, Coetzer, 27, completely overwhelmed the 15-year-old Australian 6-1, 6-0.

Then Ferreira overcame Philippoussis 6-2, 6-3 in the men's singles.

In the dead mixed doubles, the Australians gained a consolation win in straight sets, 6-2, 6-3.

Coetzer, 27, ranked 17th in the world, ruthlessly underlined the massive gap between junior and senior ranks.

But the South African played down the ease of her win, saying her opponent was very young and had a lot of potential.

"She was understandably a bit nervous," Coetzer said.

"And maybe the variety in my serve caught her off guard a bit. I thought I played rather well, and did not give her much of a chance."

"It was certainly nice to start with a win, and I will try to build on that."

Ferreira, who has a ranking of 26th, was also gracious in victory, saying he thought he had a major advantage over Philippoussis (ranked 15th) because he had two matches before he left South Africa, whereas the Australian was playing his first game after a break. "It gave me a big advantage," Ferreira said. "I came out and felt I had been playing a lot — and it makes a big difference."

Ferreira was happy with a Januan Sharif way he handled his opponent's big serve.

"I saw the ball pretty big," he said. "It was good."

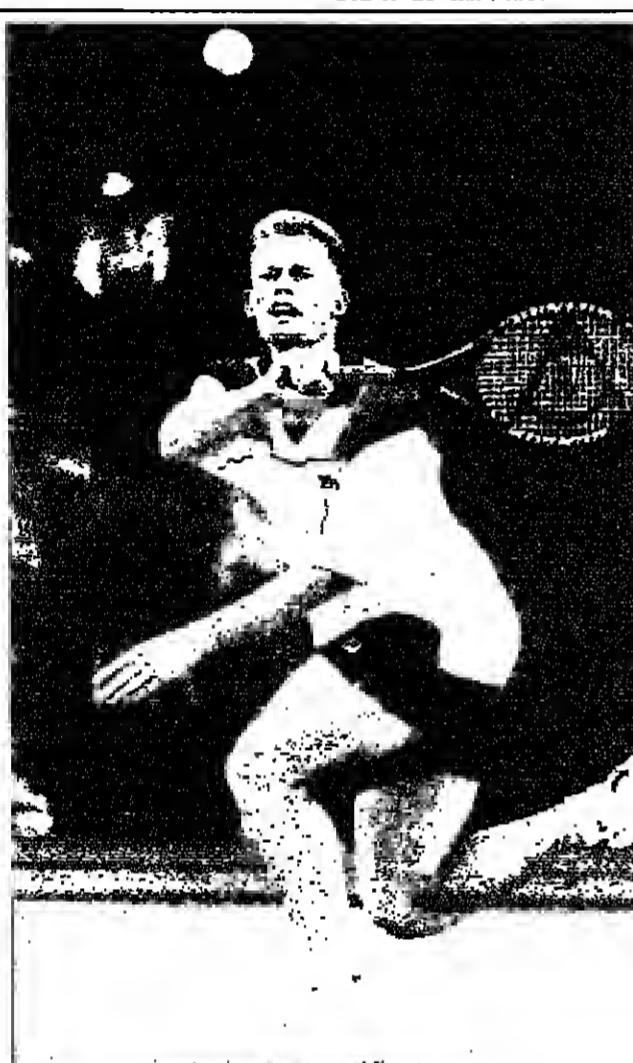
South Africa's next clash is with the French pair, Sandrine Testud, Tuesday.

Raoux, ranked 53rd, and Testud, ranked 14th, comfortably defeated

Zimbabwe's brother and sister combination, Wayne and Cara Black in a play-off Saturday.

They easily won their singles duels before Zimbabwe gained a consolation success in the dead mixed doubles.

Ferreira and Raoux will be clashing for the first time, while Coetzer has met Testud twice (in Melbourne, Australia, and at Wimbledon), with the South African winning both times.



Wayne Ferreira of South Africa plays a forehand return back over the net to his opponent Mark Philippoussis of Australia during the first session of the Hopman Cup in Perth. Ferreira won the singles match 6-2, 6-3 (AFP photo)



Amanda Coetzer of South Africa concentrates on the ball as she prepares to serve against her opponent Jelena Dokic of Australia. Coetzer won the singles match 6-1, 6-0, and is using the Hopman Cup as a lead up to the Australian Open starting in Melbourne on January 19th (AFP photo)

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIAH HIRSCH
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TAKE THE ONLY CHANCE

Both vulnerable North deals:

NORTH: ♠ Q 8 7 6 3

♦ A 9 8 6 3

♥ A 5 4

♣ K 10 7 4

WEST: ♠ 10 7 5 2

♦ A 9 8 6 3

♥ K 7

♣ 10 9 8 2

SOUTH: ♠ K 4

♦ Q 10 9 5 4 2

♥ J 8

♣ A Q J

EAST: ♠ 17

♦ 4 3

♥ 4 2

♣ Pass

